

# Tall al-Yahudiyyah

## Description

Tall al-Yahudiyyah is one of the important and valuable sites in Al-Qaliubyyah governorate. The site is completely controlled by the Supreme Council of Antiquities, under the legal status of "Property of the SCA".

The site is situated 35km southwest of Tall Itrib, about 3km southeast of Shibin al-Qanatir city and about 31 km northeast of Cairo. It is composed of two tall: At-Tall al-Kabir and At-Tall as-Saghir (i.e. the large and the small tall).

At-Tall al-Kabir is bounded to the north by Shibin-al-Qanatir-Abu Za`bal asphalt road and agricultural lands, to the northwest and west by Kafr ash-Shubak village and schools and to the east by Kafr Hamzah - Musturud asphalt road.

The Kafr Hamzah-Kafr ash-Shubak asphalt road runs across the southern part of the site. A mosque and agricultural lands are also situated to the south and to the southwest is the Abu Ghazalah cemetery. In the north, within the site, is the site storage building.

The site is cut by agricultural lands and Ash-Shaykh Abu Rawash cemetery of Kafr ash-Shubak village in the west and is almost completely covered by wild vegetation.

At-Tall as-Saghir consists of three pieces separated by the Shibin al-Qanatir - Abu Za`bal asphalt road and Al-Marg - Shibin al-Qanatir railway.

The site is situated on a rock plateau surrounded from north, east, and south by agricultural land and bordered to the northwest by the ash-Shubak cemetery. The Kafr Hamzah - Kafr ash-Shubak asphalt road runs west of the site.

Pottery is scattered on the surfaces of both tall.

## Other Names

*T3y-T3-Hwut (Ancient), Natho, Leontopolis of the Heliopolitan nome (Classical), Oniou (Greek), Tall al-Maqdam.*

## History

Tall al-Yahudiyyah was situated in the XIII Lower Egyptian nome. It is the home of "Tall al-Yahudiyyah ware," a distinct type of pottery originally thought to be of Hyksos origin, but which is now believed to be related to similar wares from both Egypt and Palestine. This pottery style was later copied in Cyprus, which implies that this city was a large trade center involved with the Mediterranean world.

Though there are a few burials and foundation deposits whose pottery suggests a 12th dynasty use of the site, there are no traces of a Middle Kingdom settlement. The earliest well-attested habitation of Tall al-Yahudiyyah is the Second Intermediate



*Location of tall al-Yahudiyyah in al-Qalyubiyyah governorate*



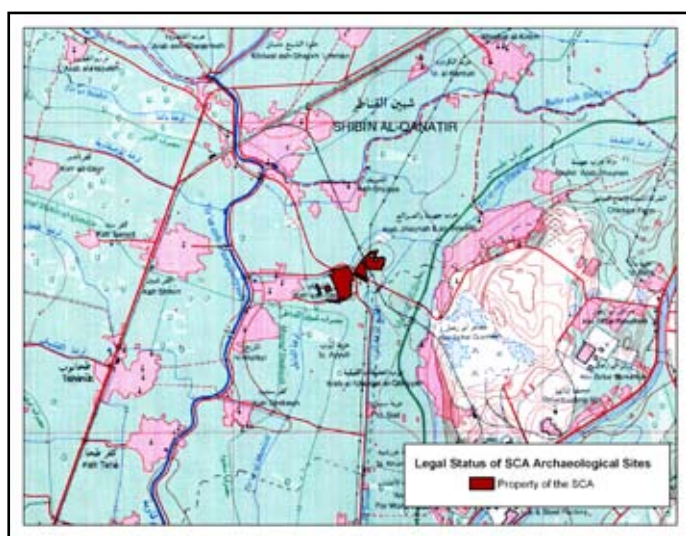
*Amlaak map showing official boundaries of site*

Period. At this time, the Hyksos built a huge rampart around their camp. Little archaeological attention has been paid to the settlement inside. In the New Kingdom, the site was rebuilt. Ramesses II built a temple and palace here, which seem to have thrived only through the 19th dynasty. Ramesses III added a tile-covered chapel, all of which has disappeared within the last century. The same pharaoh added enclosure walls to a sand wall line of defense, most likely because archers were no longer the preferred means of guard.

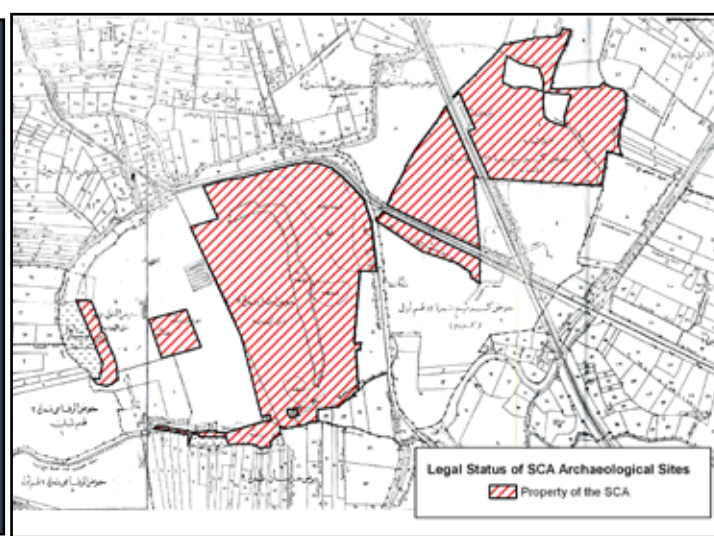
Little is known about the site during the Late Period outside of the graves dating to the 22nd to the 26th dynasty.

The Greco-Roman periods brought some focus back to the city, which contemporary documents record as being dilapidated. Ptolemy VI Philometor permitted the Jews under Onias (III) to build a temple and live in this site, as well as in a new settlement in which is not at-Tall as-Saghir, ca. 160 BC.

This was the only 2nd Temple Period (536 BCE- 70 AD) temple outside of Jerusalem. The settlement was likely destroyed following an assault in 146 BC, when Onias was serving as a general for Cleopatra II. However, the temple continued in use until 71 AD when it was closed during the systematic attacks (pogroms) on Jews under Vespasianus.



**Boundaries of site on 1:50,000 Egyptian Survey Authority topographical maps (with urban areas updated in 1990s)**



**Boundaries of site on map of ministry of agriculture (with urban areas updated in 1985)**

## Archaeological Data

The most obvious feature at the site is the sand rampart built by the Hyksos. It slopes on its outer face and yet was nearly vertical inside, typical of Syrian and Palestinian architecture. A layer of white plaster on the ramp created a type of walkway.

The slope varies anywhere from 27 to 55 degrees, and there is no gateway.

Very little attention has been paid to the settlement inside, though there are indications that the settlements of many periods do exist.

Instead, the focus lay on the Hyksos burials inside and outside of the walls. The burials at this site are similar to those at Tall al-Maskhutah, with which Tall al-Yahudiyyah was contemporary, and are mostly pit graves.

The New Kingdom remains are characterized by thick sun-dried mudbrick construction, and destruction of the western portion of the sand wall. The chapel of Ramesses III, once lined with tiles similar to those found at Tall ad-Dab'ah, has been



**Remains of enclosure wall of the Hyksos fort**

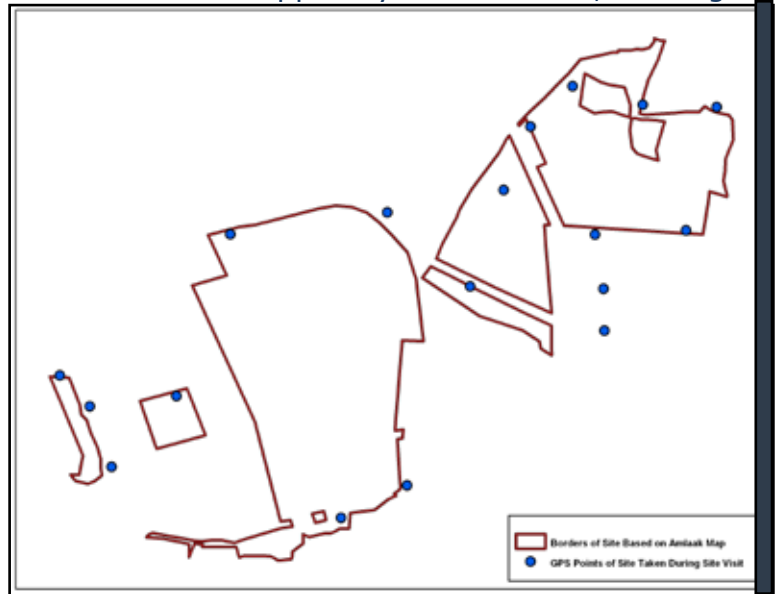


plundered and among the few archaeological traces that remain are a chapel of basalt, marble fragments, a piece of a column made of pink granite with an inscription in sunken hieroglyphs. In the New Kingdom, burials were dug in the desert and were topped by basalt tumuli, the largest of which measured 45 meters in diameter.

Later remains have been greatly extrapolated from textual resources, especially Josephus, and the only clear remnants are a Jewish settlement (built on an orthogonal plan) and a subterranean catacomb for Jewish burials.

Many small objects such as scarabs inscribed with the name of Amun-Ra, some gold objects, pottery coffins with lids and a large number of pottery jars were found on the site. Many of these objects are now in museums all over the world.

SCA excavations in the Abu Rawash cemetery to the west of at-Tall al-Kabir uncovered a mud enclosure wall with some limestone



**Map showing GPS points taken during site visits versus official boundaries of site.**

fragments. These remains and the trenches are still visible on the site.

Massive mounds cover a large area of the site, and these are the visible remains of the Hyksos fort. Limestone blocks and pink granite column fragments from the temple of Ramesses III are scattered on the ground in the middle of at-Tall al-Kabir, south of the football field. Some tombs are still visible on at-Tall as-Saghir but they are now filled with sand and rubbish.



**Limestone blocks and pink granite fragments from the Ramesses III temple**



**Pink granite column base with inscriptions; from Ramesses III temple**



**Basalt naos from the Ramesses III temple**



*Tombs on at-Tall as-Saghir*



*Al-Marg - Shibin al-Qanatir railway dividing the site into two parts*

## **Mission History**

- 2005: Nasif as-Sayyid, SCA, excavation.  
1887: Edouard Naville and Frances Ll. Griffith, EEF, UK, excavation  
1905: W. M. Flinders Petrie, EEF, UK, excavation  
1929: Le Compte du Mesnit du Buisson  
1951-52: Shihatah Adam, SCA, excavation  
1980: Hamdi Ahmad Yusif, SCA, excavation.  
1981: 'Abd al-Fatah Ahmad 'Abd al-Fatah, SCA, excavation.  
1982: 'Abd al-Fatah Ahmad 'Abd al-Fatah, SCA, excavation.  
1982: Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq Ragab, SCA, excavation.  
1987: 'Abd al-Fatah al-'Anani, Abu Bakr Mahmud, SCA, excavation.  
1990: Fawzi 'Abd an-Na'im al-Barbari, SCA, excavation.  
1992: Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq Ragab, SCA, excavation.  
1994: 'Abd al-Fatah Ahmad 'Abd al-Fatah, SCA, excavation.  
1998: Muhammad at-Tahir Muhammad , SCA, excavation

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